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Basic Needs for All

Intersectoral Interfaces of Health for All

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Chapter I

Health for All – Now!

INTER-SECTORAL ISSUES: LIVELIHOODS

General Framework

- Health means a sense of total physical, mental & social well-being.
- All means literally ALL and not a lucky few. No slogan ending "for All" has been realized whether it is "health for all" or "education for all" or "food for all". "All" remained in rhetoric. In reality everything was for a "few". Elaborate arguments are not required to prove this. This agenda has to be: how to make "all" really all.
- Physical well-being demands:
  - nutritious food
  - clean air, water and environment
  - adequate preventive and curative health care service
  - necessary exercise to all parts of the body.
  - freedom from exertion and occupation related hazards etc.
- Mental well-being requires
  - Physical health
  - A proper attitude towards life, relationships, ownerships etc.
  - A tension free, mentally healthy environment
- Proper attitude towards life means:
  - A proper understanding of human needs and their relationships, of basic needs like food, clothing shelter, etc.; of emotional needs like affection security etc., of social needs such as recognition.
- Without physical health there is no mental health. To ensure this for all, each and everybody should have access to food, clothing shelter, education, health care services etc.
- Accessibility can be ensured and enforced as a right only when participation in economic activity too becomes a basic right.
- A society with unemployment as not just an existing reality but also a theoretical necessity cannot enforce economic participation as a fundamental right.
- A society which demands a continuous increase of consumption and exchange of goods & services for its existence, a society which manufactures needs at a higher rate than the means to satisfy them, can have no proper understanding, can have no wisdom & no well being.
- So health for all requires amongst other things a continuous increase in economic and political participation of citizens and also a counter education against greed and for wisdom.
- These will not be provided by rulers and leaders of the present society - their entire philosophy of existence is based on greed and competition.

The Peoples Health Assembly Campaign Focus

The one year long national campaign preceding the Peoples health assembly at Dhakka, should be used as yet another opportunity to raise the issue of genuine development, to question the wisdom of the development path of globalization, liberalisation and consumerization, to expose the complicity (both conscious and unconscious) of the minority (of less than 20%) in betraying the interests of "all". The country has to re-charter its course in the interests of the majority. This is not easy, at a time when most erstwhile socialist countries are all fallen "in line".

The Peoples Health Campaign should therefore be used to search and develop alternative paths of development and to campaign for this path. Such campaigns can be effective only when exposure and criticism are backed up by suggestions and actions, peoples creative actions. These can be divided into two broad categories: health related and empowerment related. The peoples science movement should catalyze into action scores of progressive mass movements of workers, peasants, women, youth, students, professionals, artists etc. etc. While exposure and criticism can have international, national and state levels, creative action will have to be planned at local levels-,blocks villages and gram panchayats. Seminars, workshops etc can be held at these levels also to generate possibilities for creative action based on an understanding of what needs to be done. Implementation campaigns for sanitation, safe drinking water, nutrition, basic amenities like housing and roads, as well as preventive and curative health care can be effective only if planned and done at local levels.

The slogan **Health For All** ***Now*** is to indicate that we have been in a way waiting with expectation that somebody will bring Health for All sometime in future-say2000AD!,that we are disillusioned and that **we** are to start acting **now** for our health. Action implies initiative to make better use of existing facilities in all related areas, in advocating new efforts to be put in by the government and, above all, initiating community action.

Areas of Action

The basic needs may be classified into the following five for our ease of discussion:

1.Livelihoods:To guarantee entitlements
2.Health: to ensure a quality of life
3.Education: to enable us to make wise choices,
4.Social environment: Housing, sanitation, drainage, roads, lighting,
5.Natural environment: Should be able to regenerate itself, social life should seek harmony with the natural.

All these five areas are related. And it is their vector sum that is health!

Interventions for Livelihoods

When we plan for community action or people's initiatives (as distinct from advocacy and agitation action) in the area of livelihoods such action is based on the following:

- Growth consequent to the industrialization, or more precisely growth in the organised industrial sector has not been the major source of growth in employment. If we look at employment in the nineties we can see that the population rose by1.8%per annum and the growth of the workforce (because of changing age composition) was even higher- at about 2% per annum. But the rate of growth of employment in all sectors was less than 1%per annum.. The number of main workers would have reached at least 333 million by 1998. But employment in the organized sector is seen to have increased over this same period from 26.8 million to 28.3 million, which is a decrease from 9.4% of the work force to 8.5% of the workforce. This is despite the nineties being touted as a decade of market driven, globalization based growth.

- Where are the millions then employed. Mainly in the unorganized sector - the micro sector and in primary production. It is here that we must start work to build an alternate path of development. A path where everyone is assured a livelihood with dignity and without drudgery. Providing livelihoods must mean transforming this sector from being unorganised sector to being a powerful, organised and networked sector. It must develop the power to withstand competition from the global multinationals and assure a decent quality of life to those dependent on it for their livelihoods.

- Micro enterprises producing goods and services can be considered not as measures for poverty alleviation, but as nuclei of future economic formations. Micro can become macro and even global in a different way, through a system of interrelations extending to all fields of social existence- production and exchange of goods and services, finance, marketing, intermediate production etc.

- Building a macro network of micro enterprises requires large scale transfers of skills-for better finance, better management , better marketing, better technologies and so on. This is a challenge.

- Building markets would require capturing markets from larger players as well as creating new markets through redistributive growth and new products. The impact of the media in favour of the larger players can be counteracted through consumer education, better product quality, cheapness, improved consumer services, local patriotism etc.

- The plethora of poverty alleviation programmes of the state and central governments can be converged and synergised to raise the poor above poverty line sustainably. The resources involved in these programmes are not small. But they have seldom been used intelligently . Practically nobody has risen from BPL to APL making use of these resources. Yet it can be done. By a judicious and intelligent combination of the governmental subsidies, institutional loans and own small savings(through savings groups) substantial capital can be raised to set up small and medium community enterprises. But of course they may require considerable assistance to do so – assistance for technology, for marketing, for management etc.

- The creation of such a large network of enterprises needs the creation of organizational networks. One form of organizing could be in the form of geographical neighborhoods. Women, dalits, agricultural laborers, peasants are other platforms of organizing. In recent times the potential of small neighborhood women's groups to come together for savings and household credit needs and then move on to serving financial needs of home based occupations has become universally recognized. These groups help poor women develop capabilities at a pace and rate of growth which they find comfortable and which they can balance with their existing commitments. Many more such organizational forms for other sections and other purposes based on these general principles are possible and necessary.

- The basis for much of the increased manufacture is on the increased production of biomass. Biomass has an enormous capability both as energy source and as raw material for manufacture. Biomass, unlike other minerals as raw materials, is renewable. Production of food, fodder, fibre, energy and chemicals and materials based on biomass is now technically feasible and socially desirable. The increased production of diverse biomass to suit various needs with available land and water (and air and sun) has also the potential to generate livelihoods for millions. Today much land is wasted and almost all land is degraded. Yet this need not be so. There are enough examples to show that with the local community's involvement and with a combination of peoples wisdom and science and technology even the worst land can be greened and enough food fodder and fibre and fuel becomes available for a life of dignity, free from drudgery. The challenge now is to replicate such examples a thousand times. The challenge is also to integrate such wasteland development and agricultural development not only with provision of livelihoods to millions who live of the land but also with small scale manufacture and local infrastructure development so that many more livelihoods can be created.

- Such a massive attempt at creation of livelihoods in the primary sector needs a more equitable access to the natural resources on which primary production rests. Land is one asset. Water is another. Forests are a third. The seas and rivers are a fourth. Bio-diversity is another natural resource on which life depends. There was a time when all of this was held in common and used for the good of all. These resources could not be sold or purchased. They were venerated. Slowly first land then water got privatised. . Forests were taken away from the people who lived on them and protected them- often in the name of conservation. Or people were taken away from the forests (by dams for example). The seas were plundered by greedy industries without any care for the future. Once biodiversity was recognised as a resource the privatisation of this resource in large seed banks and their disappearance in the wild got accelerated.

- The only path to saving these resources is to give their management back to the local communities. Is for local communities to refuse to hand over these resources. For communities to network so that everywhere the rich are denied or resistance is offered to their having unlimited access to these natural resources. And the best way to offer resistance is for communities to put it to better use and manage these resources more equitably and sustainably. And by refusing to part with them.

- Whenever attempts are made to generate and improve livelihoods in the unorganised sector one must remember the problems of initiating such attempts within a system which is based on competition and greed. In such a system livelihoods that are generated can be more drudgery prone, more unfair to women, it can employ child labour to cut costs and be more exploitative of the work force than in the organised sector. Only a conscious effort to avoid this along with more democratic forms of management of these networks can prevent this from happening. Only if such a goal is attempted will such livelihood interventions lead to larger social changes.

- This is true in primary production also. We need a massive effort to bring back the productive capacity of the land in a sustainable way. But it must be an equitable way also. It must be a way where marginalisation of weaker sections decreases. If for example a water users committee is formed to manage a tank or a watershed, then it becomes essential for us to ensure that the dalits and other landless get not only wages from such work but also a part of the assets created and a share in the decision making process. These are not impossible demands. On the contrary time and again it has been shown that this is the only way of showing results that are sustained. Any other way is neither desirable, nor in the long run, feasible!

What is to be done?

A "Health for All Now" movement should have amongst other things, a component to provide this vital support to the disadvantaged and unorganized poor. Each state can set up, to begin with a group of competent professionals who will study in-depth the prospects and problems of local micro-enterprises in the era of global mega enterprises. There should be a number of study teams associated with each state core group to inquire into:

1. Physical and human-resource base.
2. Market surveys and choice of products and size of production(of either goods or services)
3. Identification of appropriate technologies, bridging the gaps that may be there, ground level operationalization, continuous up-gradation etc.
4. Marketing, creation of new market, capturing of existing markets, non-market-marketing etc.

This could be to begin with a one year programme started towards the latter part of the year There could be a number of state, regional, and national level consultations. There could be 15 to 20 state level groups and four, five subcommittees in each group. Towards the middle of the 2001we can have a tentative plan for "fight back initiative". What is the guesstimate of money available for such community initiatives from?

a. Government sources
b. Own savings
c. Institutional financing?

What could be the size of the market in macro terms created by
a. Expanding consumption (by increasing incomes of the poor)
b. Replacing larger players

The numbers involved are huge, very huge!

And that is talking of micro enterprises alone. The scope for intervention in the primary sector is just as large. For intervention in primary production however there are a number of models to learn from and replicate in tune with local requirements. What one needs is a massive network and a coordinated campaign much on the lines of the current campaign for health. After all the impact of structural adjustment on the agricultural sector is as damaging if not even more so than even the health sector.

Chapter II

Ensuring People's Basic Needs

The provisioning of basic amenities

> Primary health care includes in addition to the health sector, all related sectors and aspects of national and community development, in particular agriculture , animal husbandry, food, industry, education, housing, public works, communications, and other sectors and demands the coordinated efforts of those sectors.
>
> - *Alma Ata Declaration, 1978*

> All health and human development must ultimately constitute an integral component of the overall socio-economic developmental process in the country. It is thus of vital importance to ensure effective coordination between the health and its more intimately linked sectors. It is therefore necessary to set up standing mechanisms at the center and in the States, for securing inter-sectoral co-ordination of the various efforts in the fields of health and family planning, medical education and research, drugs and pharmaceuticals, agriculture and food, water supply and drainage, housing, education and social welfare and rural development. The coordination and review, committees to be set up, should review progress, resolve bottle necks and bring about such shifts in the contents and priorities of programmes as may appear necessary to achieve the overall objectives.
>
> - *The National Health Policy, 1983.*

The Quality of Life

Providing the basic needs of existence is not an instrumentality for some other goal. It is the one of the central goals of human society itself. The denial of these basic needs robs human existence of its dignity. Life becomes sub-human.

We need not debate what are the basic necessities of life. Ask a group of women what they would get done if they had the power to do it. (Or ask them what is their idea of heaven.) They would talk of only two things. First of course is equality, a lack of discrimination. Then they would speak of the availability of these basic necessities. Under these they would list - Food, drinking water, sanitation, clothing, shelter, , a clean environment, health care, education, energy sources, transport and communication facilities and a livelihood .Go to any village or an urban slum and ask what they want and they would tell you --it is roads ,bus service, lights, drinking water, sanitation, education for their children and jobs. Health status is a measure of the quality

of life of people. Where these basic necessities are available the quality of life can be said to be good and people are healthy. Where these are not available, the health situation is bad and life is a struggle to exist.

How surprising that though we have a democracy and though people have been expressing these wants for so many years these basic needs still remain unfulfilled. We can understand that the provision of livelihoods has been a problem because of the very unequal distribution of assets and skills as well as economic factors beyond the 'community's control. Education and health care, there has been an effort to provide. But what education of what quality is another issue. But how is it that the basic civic amenities-- drinking water, sanitation, roads, street lights, these simple basic amenities that every villager asks for and knows to ask for--how is it that even these are not yet provided for. One would expect at least the populist needs of the current democratic system to have forced the state to fulfil these basic needs. But it has not done so. Let us just consider three of the most important of these necessities - drinking water, sanitation and housing- to understand the reasons for this better and to appreciate the solutions that have been tried .

The shortfalls in basic needs

Drinking water

Estimates vary about the number of hamlets that need access to drinking water .In the eighties the Rajiv Gandhi National drinking water mission was to launch a major programme to provide drinking water to all villages. Largely the single strategy on which it was based was the installation of Mark II and Mark III hand pumps with bore wells. Another strategy widely resorted to was to install a bore-well and pump water to a overhead tank and then from there supply the water to the village through a stand post in each street. A village was considered covered if either of the above was installed. The number of villages listed as "problem village " declined drastically and soon was almost reduced to zero.

However there were problems with this. One of the first to be recognized was that many hamlets within villages were uncovered. This was particularly a problem with hamlets where scheduled castes and tribes lived , for they would not be allowed access to the village's water source. Moreover a village could be consisting of widely dispersed habitations. Desegregated to hamlets, the number of hamlets "not covered" rose to almost one third of all hamlets. The programme has since been addressing this and at present the number of habitations reported covered is in the range of 81%, with the corresponding figure for rural areas being 79% and for urban areas being 84%.

The second problem with the borewell strategy was the very common breakdown of the hand pump or mechanized pumping mechanism and the

need to constantly repair it. To a large extent the Mark-III design was meant to overcome this. The installation came along with training to the local community to repair it and with a tool kit as well. In many places like in Banda in UP women were trained to repair it. Though this was a good example of what could be done, in practice such local training of women remained an exception. In most places maintenance continues to be the main problem.

A more intractable problem with the hand pump approach was the lowering of the water table. This occurred both due to excess water drawn for irrigation needs through energized pump-sets and due to disuse and spoilage of recharge mechanism mainly the village ponds and tanks. Whereas use of water for drinking would never lower the water table significantly, irrigation use especially when cropping patterns shifted to more intensive cropping like three harvest of paddy in a year or sugarcane etc could drop the water table within a couple of years. Since the rich could deepen the bore wells, they would continue to draw long after the poor was deprived even of water for drinking! Obviously one needed an integrated planning and an equitable one, but such factors were never taken in to account.

Yet another related problem is that though there is a hand-pump installed and it is functioning people do not use the water due to its unacceptability. Often this unacceptability is due to iron, which gives it an unpalatable taste and colour. Sometimes it is fluorosis and sometimes arsenic. Both problems whose dimensions continue to expand. The main reason is a s deeper and deeper groundwater sources are tapped, these chemicals leached out of rock formations contaminate the water. This was not a problem with surface water sources, but is a problem with groundwater and as water levels fall it will only become more of a problem.

Salinity of water is yet another reason for its unacceptability in many areas. The advantage of groundwater sources extracted through a bore well is that largely, though not necessarily it is safer water. Open wells are easily contaminated and all other surface water sources like ponds, tanks, streams are almost always contaminated. Of course in many areas where ponds are the source of drinking water some ponds are earmarked for drinking and kept free from contamination due to washing, bathing and animals. Still runoff contamination would be there. However in many villages where the tube well is installed still surface water sources may be preferred even if ground water is tolerable because of cultural factors. In the absence of adequate information on waterborne diseases and the toll it takes, the need to shift to safer sources is not understood.

Due to these factors the actual usage of safe water is far less than the projected 80%. A NCAER country wide sample study puts unprotected water usage at a huge 52%.Of the protected water sources 16.6% is piped water (usually from

bore wells also), 18.4% is from hand pumps, and another 13% is from other sources of which open wells would be the majority.

That this is the situation in a problem that has always been a priority and a problem for which sufficient political will has been there is indeed a sad commentary on the governance of the nation.

Sanitation

The track record in sanitation is dismal and has always been so. The current figure for access to latrines is estimated at 29%, which is a generous overestimate. The estimate counts all the population who live in a habitation with a community latrine as having access-- though in practice none of the latrines may be functional. This also explains why according to these figures 70% of urban India is stated to have an access to sanitation. It counts every latrine built as being used, though one knows that this far from true. The rural India sanitation coverage figure is a dismal 14% and even this is only after including the building of community latrines or any latrines as latrines in use.

Even if we accept such a count that still leaves us as one of the poorest achievers on this front in the world. Thus even in impoverished Sub Saharan Africa a country like Kenya has a 81% coverage, 86% in Tanzania, 41% in Nigeria, and 57%in Uganda. Even in neighbors Sri Lanka and Pakistan it is 63% and 56% respectively.

The situation in sewage, drainage and solid waste disposal in both rural and urban areas is also equally, if not more, dismal.

This is surprising for a country where intervention in sanitation under the leadership of Gandhi himself formed a component of the freedom struggle. It is surprising considering the consistent emphasis that planners have always given to sanitation on paper. It is true that the expenditure on sanitation has been low but, the government would assure you, even this much utilization has been difficult. Most often latrines built are just not used or used for other purposes like storing firewood.

Another surprising finding that we should read along with these very same figures is the consistent way surveys especially in the last decades have shown a fairly high awareness and demand for sanitary facilities. This is much more so amongst women where sanitation is closely linked to the whole question of personal dignity. With declining scrub cover, privacy becomes such a problem. The strain of restricting toilet needs to only the early morning hours or the late nights is a health hazard and cause of untold suffering and misery. Education and the consequent changes in perception amongst women have also made sanitation an urgent priority, more so in semi-urban areas and large villages and areas where women's education is higher. Also as we look inter

state comparisons the performance in sanitation neither co-relates to per capita incomes, not to poverty, or to other health indices directly. It is more related to education and the nature of interventions with which the problem has been addressed.

The other major aspects like dimensions like wastewater disposal and solid waste collection and disposal need action by local bodies (both elected representatives and local officials). Whereas in urban areas this presents an enormous and visible (and malodorous) problem, even in rural areas it is a problem that tells on health and the quality of life. Cash strapped municipalities are unable to afford the minimum funds needed for adequate staff and the conditions of work for such staff are so poor that usually no work discipline has been possible. In most rural areas it is no ones agenda.

Housing

There are many estimates of housing shortfall. The lowest estimate (of the National Housing policy statement-1998) still it puts it at 22.9million houses based on the 1991 census. The minimum resources needed for completing this task in the Ninth plan period was estimated atRs151000crore! Urban infrastructure would need a further 250000 crore.

During the initial years of planning in India, the level of confidence in effective government intervention in housing was high. But budget allocations did not match up to dreams. In the second five-year plan an outlay of 2.5 percent was marked for housing. This fell to 1.5 by the fifth plan. In the 8th plan it was about 1.47 percent. Private investment in housing has also not kept pace, though the ration of private to public investment has shifted in favor of the private sector. Thus in the second plan public investment was 300 crores and private investment was three times that amount – 900 crores. Together it represents 19% of the total investment in the economy. In the seventh five year plan public investment was almost 2500 crores whereas private investment was more than ten times that – a sum of Rs 29000 crores. But together it now represents only 9.0% of the total investment in the economy. (Source EPW: Social impact of reforms, Vol 35, No.10, March 4-10, pg. 845)

Public expenditure in housing has been largely in the form of a number of schemes-both under the center and the state. Of the central schemes specifically directed to the economically weaker sections, the Indira Awas Yojana has been one of the largest. In the states it has come under the minimum needs programmes. But the amount of houses such schemes are designed to build are relatively small compared to the needs. The problem of rural housing must be seen separately from that urban housing. In rural areas where land is easier available for building at least a traditional mud and thatch structure or whatever is the local equivalent is usually built up by the family itself. The demand for a better more all weather construction is there, but if

they have the income most families would make a suitable up gradation of their dwelling place. Building a cement and concrete structure for these dwellings is not the urgent priority and the problem of rural housing need not be equated with that. It should be more seen as a problem of providing land and helping the rural households to upgrade their existing dwelling unit periodically. And of course of being able to get a minimum wage and access to credit at reasonable rates. The situation in urban and semi urban areas on the other hand is grim and we must look at this in more detail.

The Urban Situation

In 1947 we had a total population close to 330 million, of which some 14% was urban. By 2001the urban estimate is 33%. Which means that roughly 330 million, or the same as the entire population at independence. By 2025 it is expected that the urban population will cross the 50percent mark. Of this there are 6mega cities with populations above 40 lakh and 40 metropolitan cities and 300 large towns (population > 1lakh) and 3396 small towns. One must also note that almost 60% of the GDP may be from urban India by 2001. (Source: Suresh V, Managing Director HUDCO, Address on Directions for Rural and Urban Development in the New Millennium).

Of the urban population 84% have access, often partial, to potable water, while only 46% have access to sewerage and sanitation services. As many as 31% have no access to latrines and 28% have no access of any sort to waste collection. Twenty five percent have no electricity. Pollution and an unhealthy environment is widespread and affects most urban areas.

Much of the urban population lives in slums. These are zones with generally little or no civic infrastructure, the most rudimentary of housing (or what has been termed informal housing), often without rights to the land or access to any state health facilities.

We need to recognize three aspects of the slum situation. Firstly most slums are not illegal. Many are legal and recognized. But there are many squatter settlements, which are unauthorized and therefore ignored by all planners unless they manage political clout. Secondly, even those who are legal today, often started illegally and through long struggle gained the right to live in security and dignity. Often their regularization was gained through sustained negotiations with politicians. Thirdly, even in the worst of such settlements and even on pavements some community structures and bonds emerge. These communities have built their own homes and play a very important part in the economy and their location is often important for this role. Even if removed this relationship where the city needs their labour and their market and they need the employment, brings them back.

The general approach to slums has been in the past to treat them as eyesores and as illegal if not criminal elements. The approach to managing them has been largely eviction and demolition. Applying criteria of aesthetics (beautifying campaigns), housing standards and legalities these settlements are treated as if other than eviction there is no option. This was the main trend in the sixties right through to the eighties. A number of states in the 1982-84 period passed anti encroachment legislation presumably to check unauthorized construction by commercial interests but given the nature of power was more used against these settlements of the poor. By changing trespass from a civil to a criminal offense the law further criminalized millions of people and exposed them to further exploitation and harassment.

By the selective development of infrastructure and location of government and commercial offices certain areas shoot up in values and eviction of land from these central areas becomes immensely beneficial land speculators and the few real estate magnates who own most of the land. Even the middle class has to leave the center and migrate to distant, low infrastructure suburbs to survive.

The entire process of structural adjustment is only going to worsen these trends. Detailing the effects of the impact of SAP on housing and living conditions the National Campaign for Housing Rights (NCHR) states that "the accelerated unemployment that accompanies SAP, especially when coupled with sharply rising prices, the impact of cuts in subsidies on social services such as health, the impact of privatization and abrogation by the State of its responsibilities in planning, the impact of further increases in land and housing prices, including a sharp increase in the forced criminalization of the poor and an increasing eviction and demolition by private and public landlords in order to reclaim the land for more profitable uses. Further the only progressive piece of legislation on urban housing that the government had enacted, the Urban Land Ceiling Act of 1976 was repealed in the name of allowing market forces to act. The truth is that like the rural land ceiling act this was never implemented and almost no land was anywhere confiscated or surrendered and resold under this act. Writing on these changes Jai Sen, Convenor of NCHR writes, "these are not conditionalities of SAP but they mark the shift from the populist socialism of the Seventies to the brazen marketism of the nineties. The very vision of social housing has been lost. Housing is no longer considered an instrument for bringing about redistributive justice."

The experience with government schemes

Over the last thirty years the governments has implemented a number of schemes in these areas of basic amenities development. We can look at a few of them to understand their limitations better.

In sanitation the main programme that has been operational during this period is the CRSP , or the central rural sanitation programme. The states had a

programme under the minimum needs programme but since this was largely modeled along the lines of the CRSP one can consider the former alone.

The CRSP is based on a target of building so many latrines every year. The latrine model is standardized. The cost of the latrine is standardized. The amount of subsidy per latrine and the conditions of its construction are standardized. The target is distributed amongst states and then redistributed downwards till each block development officer has a quota, which he can allot to a small number of beneficiaries. Since NGO participation is considered desirable they are also given a quota.

What happened? A lot of latrines were built. Many were built for beneficiaries well above the poverty line. These families had the access to the local politician or official to get their name on the beneficiary list. Those below the poverty line had other priorities. Given a good quality cemented structure they chose to use it to store grain or firewood. Often the latrines did not have water provision. Often the community latrines had no maintenance arrangement and would go into disuse almost immediately after being built. No other aspect of sanitation- neither drainage nor solid waste got managed. It remained despite all protestations to the contrary a latrine-building programme.

This poor performance was interpreted to mean that the people were not ready for it. A lot more IEC:(information, education and communication) it was declared had to go in. NGOs may have obtained better results. At least some of them being more conscientious ensured that only those who were willing to pay got the latrines. But on the whole their experience was also the same. Moreover in a subsidy driven programme even a good NGO would soon run out of money and then work would completely stop, till whenever the next project was cleared. A vested interest would develop for the next allocation. It was also shown that in this period for every one latrine built with state subsidy at least owners themselves on their own initiative built two. Further in all probability the possibility of getting a full subsidy through patronage (which under rules was not possible) slowed down the natural market in the sections above the poverty line. Ultimately the government had to retreat from this programme.

The CRSP programme had however its supporters. In general the politicians and officials approved of it. Giving such subsides or building a latrine had a patronage element to it. In a high demand area, the beneficiary would require the patronage. In all areas the contractor who got the order would be grateful. To the political system such a scheme represented not only a token, highly visible gesture that the state was intervening but more important that in popular consciousness the blame for the failure would shift to peoples lack of motivation. When even the existing allocation could not be spent, where was the question of allocating more funds? On the other hand if the scheme had worked, not even a small fraction of what was needed for total coverage would

be available. But the scheme was never made for such a possibility. It assumed lack of interest and got it. On the other hand alternatives like the Midnapore programme provide no subsidy, but by virtue of their replicability and the demand they generate, result in a much higher govt. expenditure on sanitation.

In drinking water the main scheme was the Rajiv Gandhi Drinking Water Mission and the experience of this mission, which was discussed earlier, was similar. Here too solutions were standardized and implemented top-down with little community participation. Maintenance was poor where solutions were appropriate and in many paces the solution was inappropriate. Again the programme was very visible, but little local employment was generated.

In rural housing it is the Indira Awas Yojana another scheme that is more symbolic of govt's concern. Even if every house built was fully utilized the scheme at its present rate can no more than scratch the surface of the problem. However for eliciting political mileage it is an invaluable programme. Wherever the landless get restive or unhappy with the government's defense of its sectional interests this scheme proves useful to ameliorate the tension. But to either ameliorating the housing situation or in restructuring the 1.5 lakh crore market that rural housing represents this scheme has no role.

Indeed the general pattern of all these programmes for provision of basic amenities can be described as the following:

1. A central plan with standardized products and technologies, often leading to inappropriate choices.
2. A target so small compared to the total that only a small fraction of those who need it are covered, but this is enough to legitimize the government ("to show " that it is seized of the problem and settle those villages where the demand is articulated more powerfully).
3. In this context it allows the local politician/official to make a choice of beneficiaries that feeds patron client relationships .Such relationships are essential to sustain inequitable social structures. Subsidies help in this process. Especially when only a small fraction can access the benefits, deciding on who would get the benefits provides a role for local patronage.
4. No people's participation at any stage of the programme, nor any role for panchayats. A general approach where people, especially poor people are not the subjects of development, not even partners in development. They are passive beneficiaries at the best or as in the case of the urban poor, persons who must pay the costs of development!
5. The entire employment and income generation involved by this considerable government expenditure goes to promote a contractor-politician -official axis with considerable wealth accruing to this section whereas for the mass of the people it is only wage labour under one of the worst and most exploitative conditions of labour.

Note: The building (construction) sector provides employment to 16% of the work force (in absolute terms - 146 lakh in 1997). It is growing at the rate of 7%. Out of this, the housing sector alone accounts for 85.5 lakh workers of which 55% are unskilled. State intervention in infrastructure development must address how this affects the life and health of these millions and equity concerns related to it.

The Alternatives

The alternative path to the creation of the basic civic amenities requires the following:

- **Decentralisation:** This involves a local fixing of priorities and a local planning. The institutional structures, to ensure genuineness of participation, are important. In most situations it should be the elected panchayat or municipality. But one may need especially in the large municipalities' additional structures. Thus a tank association may be needed if drinking water is to be planned for integrated with water for irrigation needs. A community organization may be needed in a slum improvement programme. A village committee may be set up to assist a sanitation programme and so on.

  Decentralization also involves a substantial transfer of resources to the local body. Without such a transfer of resources it would be farcical. The corollary of this is the winding down of top down schemes of the center and the state and handing over of all funds needed for local infrastructure development to the district, block and village panchayats. Of course the necessary safeguards should be in place and training to the elected members and consultancy for planning should be provided for, but the funds have to be handed down.

- **Appropriate technology choice**: Decentralization makes it possible for appropriate technological choice, but it is not a sufficient condition to ensure it. One needs professional assistance from a section of professionals who are aware of the bias that technology hides and of the limitations of professionalism. Thus for example the provision of drinking water in a sustainable manner needs integration of planning for drinking water with irrigation needs. In one area it may mean the need to improve water harvesting, renovate ponds and tanks and in another it may mean the creation of an infiltration gallery. In both these villages the peoples spontaneous and first demand as well as the suggestions by the available expert may be only the dominant paradigm. It is only when we critically interrogate this paradigm that we would uncover the problems with this paradigm and be able to build, often based on peoples own wisdom and traditions an alternate paradigm.

Let's take another example: In housing very often the housing design opted for spontaneously is the dominant standardized cement and concrete structure. Low cost building alternatives are neither welcomed by people- at least at the first instance, nor by the contractor or the local official. Even more so when we come to housing design. Few engineers and even architects would think it important enough to conserve the heritage implicit in the locality when modeling the new. Few would provide for adequate pavements let alone pavement activity as an important element of housing design. When a highway sweeps through a village or town there are few planners who think of how a village rent apart by such high velocity traffic should be modeled so that its normal social and economic life can proceed safely. Decentralization alone does not provide these answers. Only a radical critique of existing technology made available with adequate professionalism at the local level resolves these issues of technology choice. The experts display the technology options, but the people choose, after a dialogue.

- **Policy changes** that allow people, especially the poor, the minimum rights needed to assert their basic dignity and rights are important. Of these the most important is land. Right to land for building their own shelter is a fundamental right and a better way of resolving housing problems than building houses for everyone. Most programmes have shown that once this right is given, people build their own houses and periodically upgrade it. Assistance both in technology and credit will help them develop their housing at a quality and at a quantity that the government can never hope to match.

- **Access to credit** is another important dimension.

- The use of these programmes as **massive employment generation programmes** is another important dimension. But one needs to emphasize that this should not mean either that all construction is by the state people getting only casual wages as construction labor or that one promotes the private corporate sector. Neither would work. The total value of sanitation in a district even if only 50% of the households opt for it, would be upwards of Rs 50 crores. Since this 50% of the households is above the poverty line, there is no reason that with proper promotion the private sector should not be able to get handsome returns in a rural sanitation industry, especially when they have so much skill in selling even what is totally inessential. Yet this has not happened. Nor is it likely to happen.

The private sector in the construction industry, in real estate and in all the provision of infrastructure tries to focus only on the upper segment of the market and that too in urban areas. Possibly, though the market is large, the

profitability – the return on investment – compared to the amount of capital sunk is not remunerative enough. But this same logic does not hold true for small producers and small producer cooperatives that have less overheads and smaller scale of operations and settle for smaller profits. The Midnapore example shows that such small producers do manufacture and install a tremendous number of sanitary facilities and components at dramatically reduced costs and are still able to make a good income by their standards. No doubt facilitation is needed, to provide working capital, to provide training, some management support initially. But given these small local manufacturers, either as individual entrepreneurs or organized into production cooperatives has the best promise.

Even at the larger level of the state and the nation it is housing boards, corporations and cooperatives that have been essential for progress and any moves to merely hand them over to private hands should be resisted. Housing cooperatives for the salaried middle class has also been very successful. We need to learn from these successes

Experiences to learn from

The above suggestions are not utopian suggestions. On the contrary the only major successes in infrastructure creation come from models with one or more elements of the above integrated to it. We may also add that almost every successful model is developed within our country, pointing to how redundant or damaging external funding and advice can be.

1. The Kerala Decentralization Experience

The state government of Kerala decided in 1996 to go in for a major political and economic decentralization. As part of this programme it passed down 40% of the government budget to be spent through panchayats. Panchayats were encouraged, trained and supported by experts to draw up plans for this 40% based on the local priorities. To no ones surprise the basic civic amenities were the first articulated priorities. It was roads, lights culverts, drainage, latrines, water supply, community hall and so on. Helped by the officials in the line departments and organizations like the KSSP they drew up cost estimates and design and proceeded to implement these plans. Money available from schemes were seen as resource allocations rather than as fixed instructions. In the first year, the panchayats were only partially effective as they were only beginning to learn and as the system was despite the political commitment resisting at every level. But as the years mount the situation improves. Many of the basic amenities that had remained as demands for over 50 years are achieved in the first few years of this change.

2. The Sri Lanka "Social Contract System"

Sri Lanka has one of the best records on housing in the whole of Asia. Critical to its success was the social contract scheme that it introduced in the seventies. In the scheme the local communities planned out the habitat related work and developed it as an employment generation programme for that area. Experts were used but they were to spell out the options only. The decisions were left to the people.

3. The Midnapore Sanitation Programme

Easily one of the most successful programme, over 1.5 lakh latrines were installed in the district with almost no overt subsidy component. The key component of the programme was these

1. It followed the massive mobilisation of the literacy campaign and this programme itself had a major mobilisational and educational component. Indeed this was the main activity the government and lead NGO concentrated on.
2. The delivery was organized through the sanitary mart concept which supplied building material with little markup and where all the components were available at affordable prices. Production of the components and running the mart was by providing employment for local youth. These youth were trained and provided some capital and support for the first year. Installation was by locally trained masons. The employment generation by the programme was high.
3. There was no subsidy. But the rates and designs were flexible and up gradable. One could start with a Rs600 latrine and progressively upgrade to a two-pit pucca superstructure Rs 6000 latrine. Buyers could put in their labor or materials and reduce costs.
4. The panchayats were systematically involved at every stage. In some areas they ran the marts themselves, though this was not as successful.
5. The government, the NGO and the panchayat were able to establish a meaningful partnership.

4. The site and service route – the Bilaspur Asha Abhiyan and other slum development/resettlement programmes

The approach consists essentially of recognizing the slum situation as one of giving rights to secure and dignified living conditions to the poor and that they have by the essential nature of their economic contribution earned that right. The first step is to create an institutional structure, usually a registered society, with all families represented and an adequate gender mix. The real residents need to be carefully identified. This is because slumlords control much of the land. The latter are thrice offenders. They are offenders because they have

illegally occupied land, then they have illegally let it out and collect a rent from what is not theirs and thirdly they evict tenants at will for extraction of rent or favour. In any resettlement the real residents are given rights taking care not to all benami or directly control to remain with the slumlords. This is the critical step as the latter are well connected politically and criminally.

The next step is to offer to legalise all the current residents ownership of land allocating a minimum for each. In return they plan out amongst themselves a way to resettle/relocate their houses in the same space so that everyone gets the minimum space plus proper sewage, waterlines, roads and a playground is laid down. The building of houses is their own. The government can help with credit given through the same society. The design of both habitat and of individual houses is not insisted on from outside. With the help of sensitive architects they can make the proper choice. This has been demonstrated in other programmes like the Mahila Milan programme here 600 pavement dwelling women drew up their own designs.

Once the construction starts the families shift as is required, till the basic realignment of houses is achieved. The municipality comes in now to lay the sewer and waterlines and electricity. At the end of the process other supportive activities like continuing and vocational education programmes, health care, daycare centers for children etc can also be organized so that in a phased manner and under their own guidance they win the basic necessities of a life with dignity and security.

The critical steps in the process is building and sustain the institutional arrangement at the local level and the grant of land rights to the residents, excluding the slumlords who are not resident there. Often enough this process of excluding the slumlords from the process gets the initiating official transferred and the programme is scuttled.

5. The UNGRA model:

This is an example of integrated approach to resolving drinking water needs using and enhancing livelihoods using appropriate technologies and village level participatory institutional arrangements. In the dry drought prone village of Ungra, a biogas plant was set up. The farmers provided the cow dung for the plant. The amount each one of them provided was recorded and at the time of manuring the fields they could take back an equivalent amount of biogas slurry that is richer than the cow dung used as such. The biogas produced was used to operate a generator and the electricity so produced was used to supply water(through pumping to an overhead tank and from there distributing through pipes)to the doorstep of each house for one hour each morning. Each night three hours of electricity was supplied to each house to light the house. Some irrigation water for growing fodder or for one or two critical watering for a second crop could also be supplied if there was water available. The

village committee set up for this purpose managed the entire operations and they employed one person to maintain the whole system. In subsequent villages, the village not only offered to provide the land but also a fair part of the labor and costs of setting up this system. This is not surprising considering the fact that earlier women would have to walk two hours to fetch water, whereas now they could have the luxury of getting at their doorstep. If women are saved from the drudgery of collecting water, fodder and fuel by such collective arrangements the gain to women and child health is considerable. Indeed no other single factor may contribute as much to child health in the poor household as the availability of the mother's time for childcare and as much to women's health as the relief from the drudgery and exertion of her daily routine.

In this model we see many of the elements of the alternatives that we had outlined above.

People's Initiatives for Basic Amenities

The central message is this – it is not enough any longer to merely demand for the state to provide basic amenities. Local bodies and organisations of the people must go beyond it to plan out what they need, how it should be provided and how it should be financed. In this they should take the assistance of sensitized activists with technical knowledge and skills who can help them develop capabilities and provide them with technology choices. If making such plans and mobilizing for their implementation becomes the main form of activism it would have a much better chance of meeting peoples basic needs and itself becomes part of the process of transformation.

Chapter III

Basic Education

Introduction

The relationship between education and health is well established. Most societies where schooling is universal have much better indices of health than societies with large illiterate populations. Studies have even shown that with number of years of schooling there is a proportional reduction in infant mortality. The impact is most on women and child health and on fertility control.

Part of the impact of education on health is due to better access to information. Those with schooling have more information on the causes of disease and the ways to prevent or cope with it. But this is only part of the explanation. Schooling also changes the attitude to oneself and the natural and social environment. The ability to respond to health problems and seek to change circumstances that lead to ill health, instead of accepting it as part of nature (used in a sense where it is like accepting ones fate) may be enhanced by schooling.

Irrespective of how exactly schooling acts to enhance health, the fact that it does so is undeniable. Moreover in its own right the universalisation of basic education is a goal for any modern society.

The current crisis in schooling

Access to schooling has no doubt increased considerable over the last five decades. The number of villages without schools is now a relatively small minority. However this does not by itself mean that the goals of universal elementary education has been met. Not even universal primary education is anywhere near achievement. The central problems in school education now are the problems of dropouts and of attainment.

Any discussion on education in India needs to confront the distressing feature of very high dropout rates during the initial years of schooling. The inability of the system to retain children has been the major stumbling block in providing basic education to all. In fact if all children enrolled in primary schools proceeded to complete eight years of elementary education (as the writers of the Indian constitution had desired) the middle schools would have serious problems of accommodating them. The ratio between middle and high schools is better, indicating that those who survive eight years of schooling have a higher chance to survive longer. Thus relentless elimination of children from the education system takes place, during the earliest grades. 44% of children

enrolled in Grade 1 leave before reaching Grade V, and 63% of those originally enrolled do not reach Grade VIII (Table-1). This heavy rate of dropouts has remained stable over the last three decades.

Reasons for dropouts

The conventional argument put forward to explain high drop out rates has tended to locate the problem in the context of child labour. However micro studies in this regard do not entirely support this contention. "While, children's involvement in paid/unpaid work is much higher among older children (1 0-14 years), the highest incidence of dropouts takes place among younger children. However it is to be noted that studies show that children's involvement in work is higher among girls (mainly unpaid domestic work). A study in rural Tamil Nadu suggested that girls spent on an average twice as much time working as boys. Another study in Ballia (UP) showed that in the 10-14 years age group, 15.8% of boys and 34.7% of girls were involved in unpaid domestic work, while 1.8% boys and 1.6% girls were involved in paid work. It needs to be understood that high drop out rates do not necessarily have to do with child labour. In fact it has been suggested that children are often put to work as a deterrent to idling, rather than as an economic necessity. What most studies indicate is that a general dissatisfaction with the education system encourages parents to send their children to work rather than to school. There is also a widely held opinion that the completion of school will not ensure or enhance employment prospects.

Two major factors appear to contribute to the dropout rates. First, in spite of the government claims to the contrary, even poor families have to incur expenses to send their children to school right from the Primary stage. One study indicates that 14.4% of students in rural areas and 49% of students in urban areas pay tuition fees in addition to other fees and non-fee expenses. Another study in the states of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Rajasthan indicated that household expenditure on elementary education, even in government schools, is not negligible. Such expenditure, per annum, ranged from Rs.3 85 in Maharashtra to Rs. 1,200 in Karnataka. Such studies seriously bring into question the constitutional provision of providing "free" education to all up to the age of 14.

The other factor that has a bearing on dropout rates is the quality of education imparted, and the facilities provided in government run schools. According to the Fifth All-India Education Survey:

1. Barely half of all primary schools have a pucca building
2. 42% have a single classroom (if any), iii) just over half have a useable blackboard, iv) less than half have any drinking water facilities, v) only 16% 1, onwards) from the household. Gender disparity in education is reflected in the lower literacy rate among women -- 39.3 % literacy rate, for females against 64. 1% among males (1991 census). This is,

moreover, a continuing trend, with much lower enrolment of girls at all levels, starting from the primary level. (Table 5).

Table 5
Enrolment Up to Primary Level
(in millions)

	Girls	Boys
1990-91	40.4	57.0
1991-92	42.3	59.0
1992-93	44.9	60.5
1993-94	46.4	61.8
1994-95	46.8	62.3

The poor quality of education imparted has another dimension. The lack of attainment - or what has been termed the wastage of schooling. What this refers to is that children may complete the fifth class without learning to read or write or do simple calculations expected at that level. One expects 8 to 10 years of education to be able to equip the child with some basic skills and knowledge. If this is nowhere near achieved then the purpose of schooling has been subverted. In fact many parents note that their child "is not able to learn" and withdraw the child from school. This process on the social scale is a process by which social hierarchies are justified and legitimized.

The poor quality of education is not primarily a function of facilities provided. It is more a resultant of the pedagogy employed. What one needs to emphasize to the poor is that the inability of the child to learn is a failure of the system(or even the hidden purpose of it) but certainly not the failure of the child . Every child has the ability to develop competence in all areas of basic education, if the pedagogic approach is appropriate and adequate.

Let us, in this background, look at the impact of new policies that are being put in place as part of the liberalization agenda of the government.

Impact of Liberalization

That the social sector, in particular education, has been adversely affected by the policies of liberalization and globalization of the economy pursued by the Indian State, reflected in decrease in financial allocations in real terms, has been evident in the past few years. These impacts, now visible at the policy level too, are however masked by public pronouncements, made by the, State, and its allied intellectuals, that tend to portray a positive linkage between the process of economic liberalization and primary education. In the neo-liberal economic paradigm, such a linkage essentially implies a lesser role for the State and a greater stress on the functioning of the market. It is not surprising

therefore that vigorous moves towards privatization along with the decrease in State expenditure, partially compensated by loans from multilateral funding agencies have been evident, not only in higher but in elementary education too, in the recent past.

As far as education is concerned, the neo-liberal path advised for our national policy (in the context of global knowledge wars) is a "survival of the fittest" approach, based on an extension of parental choice in a market of competing schools, colleges and universities. Since the funding for basic education has essentially to come from the State, the idea would be to create a quasi-market within which schools will compete. In a poor nation like India the goal would be to considerably reduce State expenditure by diluting the very notion of schooling, so that a bare minimum access is provided.

The flaw in this reasoning rests on the premise that all social groups come to an educational market as equals. In a country where caste, class and gender disparities are rampant, the criterion of choice and competition provides a mechanism by which the middle classes become the only gainers, which only helps to deepen the disparities. The consequence is glaringly obvious -- the school system is getting further polarized in terms of social class and resources.

This liberalization mantra has other significant consequences too: for instance, the opening up of basic education to external aid. Since the Kothari-Commission report on education in 1968, the Indian State has repeatedly affirmed its resolve to provide at least the recommended 6 per cent of GDP for education. Even as late as 1992, simultaneous with the commencement of the liberalization process, the resolve was forcefully repeated at the Nine Country Summit on Education at New Delhi that the incremental increase in educational allocations would reach the 6 per cent figure by the year 2000. In spite of such commitments at national and international fora, the fact is that India was spending just over 3 per cent of its GDP on education in 1998.

Acknowledging that the structural adjustment programme imposed through IMF lending, would necessitate cuts in spending on the social sector in India, the World Bank offered its most vaunted social safety net to India in 1992. This is a euphemism for loans at somewhat lower rates of interest that the Central government utilized to set up the controversial District Primary Education Program (DPEP). Controversial because even though the DPEP funds account for a mere four to five percent of total expenditure on elementary education, it has nevertheless begun to dominate the setting up of agendas for basic education, in a variety of ways. It is obvious therefore that the policy commitments of the Indian State have been overshadowed by the Fund/Bank prescriptions ever since the liberalization process started and the will of the government to fulfill its obligations, both constitutional and

otherwise, to help universalize elementary education, is woefully lacking, though the rhetoric goes on unabated.

The 83rd Amendment Bill

The evidence of such lack of will has become abundantly clear from the fate of the bill seeking the 83rd amendment of the Constitution. This bill, though controversially drafted, would provide an Indian citizen the Right to Education, and for the elementary stage, the government would be legally responsible for any failures to do so. This is obviously a much more stringent obligation of the State than that provided by the directive principle of the Constitution that exhorts the State to "endeavor to provide free and compulsory education to all the children up to age fourteen". The State was directed to achieve such an objective by 1960, but forty years later the situation continues to be dismal with nearly 50 percent, or 10 crore children in the age group 6-14 out of schools -- either having never enrolled or having dropped out. Thus, it is obvious that the 83rd amendment fulfils the need for more compelling and stringent action on part of the government. Drafted during the tenure of the United Front government (1997), the bill could not be introduced before yet another ministry fell. As is the practice, the bill was accompanied by a financial commitment, prepared by a committee headed by the then Minster of State for education, Saikia. This report envisaged an allocation of Rs.40,000 crores for education in the Ninth Plan (as compared to about Rs.20,000 crores in the Eighth Plan). The passing of the bill with such a financial commitment would have been a major landmark in the government's commitment to basic education. The ministries that followed have quietly shelved the bill, informally citing inability to commit the kind of funds envisaged by the Saikia committee.

Policy Recommendations

At the level of policy recommendations the central goal of all democratic movements have remained enshrining basic education as a fundamental right and undertaking all the legislative, administrative and financial tasks needed to achieve this. This would include making primary education compulsory and eradicating child labour. It would include the universal access to good quality school and social security measures like the noon meal scheme and free textbooks scheme that make it possible for the poor to send their children to school. It would mean planning economy with the central objective of finding the funds required for providing such education rather than planning education according to the funds available in an economy planned with different goals in mind.

Peoples Initiatives for Basic Education

Democratic movements have over the years been able to keep the policy recommendations on the agenda. To a large extent the expansion of schooling is a result of this. This task has to be sustained and strengthened.

But there is also urgent necessity for other forms of people's initiatives to address the main crisis of schooling -the issues of quality and of dropouts. There are many examples that we need to study in some detail. Two important examples are the work of the MV foundation in Ranga Reddy district and of the Eklavya in Madhya Pradesh. The other is the experience of innovative government projects like Lok Jumbish. The Jeevanshala work of the BGVS is at an early stage. The KSSP and the TNSF has also done considerable work in this regard.

Some of the important directions features of these people's initiatives are:

1. A focus on restructuring pedagogy whose central thrust is the training of teachers. The process also includes evolving more flexible,relevant and culturally appropriate syllabus. Another corollary of these interventions is to build up a network of teachers who are sensitised to the politics of pedagogy and work for and themselves use alternate pedagogies.

2. Involving communities in understanding the school and its crisis and helping them to contribute/take charge of the local school so as to make it more effective- in enrolment ,in retention and in attainment.

In both of these directions an important issue to consider is:

Are we looking at these directions as some sort of model building, a better form of posing alternatives, so that the political-administrative system comes under democratic pressure to implement such changes over a wider area?

OR

Do we see a massive replication by people's movements across the nation as the main form in which such educational change will come? It is understood that in the latter scenario the state "develops the will" to cooperate with people's movements as part of the growth of public opinion in favour of this process.

Chapter IV

Securing People's Future

Interface Between Livelihood Issues and the Health Campaign

Introduction

Security of livelihood is integrally linked to the health of the society and individuals. If households have secure incomes and livelihoods then they can access the component essential for a healthy lifestyle. Proper nutrition, food, water, sanitation, medical benefits and other such factors that make for a healthy life are all a function of steady employment and an income that is commensurate with the rise in prices of goods and services. At the same time the conditions and nature of work that people do also have a profound impact on the mental and physical health of people. This is especially seen in the case of women and child health.

Security of livelihood, the conditions of work and the nature of employment are in turn dependent on both, environmental and macro-economic factors. The casualisation of labour after economic reforms and the expansion of the unorganised sector have led to precarious conditions of work and the lack of social safety nets for a large section of population. This has also had a direct impact on the quality of life. At the same time the structural adjustment policies have led to increase in prices of food grains and move to privatise all services. In the era of fluctuating incomes these developments lead to a worsening of living conditions.

It is common knowledge that the degradation of the natural resource base is an important factor in the declining productivity of land and degradation of water sources. This in turn adversely affects the food security and the quality of drinking water. Similarly deforestation has influenced the increasing heat and pollution levels that directly affect our health status. Thus all these factors not only impact upon the livelihood of people but also upon their health.

This chapter highlights some important trends that influence issues relating to livelihood and health.

Employment Insecurity

The rate of employment has declined from 1.44% in 1991 to 0.67% in 1997. The post-reform period has seen an increase in the unorganised sector and therefore the growing level of job insecurity. The worsening conditions of work are also reflected in the nature of employment that people are seeking.

Some of the major features of employment insecurity are:

Shrinking of the Organised Sector

The growth of the organised sector has experienced regression in the last 2 decades. Whereas the a growth rate of the organised sector was about 2.5% in the 1970s it came down to around 1.5% in the 1980s and was around 1% in the post reform period i.e., 1990s. Between 1990 and 1998 the employment in the organised sector decreased from 9.4% to 8.5 %. This means that less than 10% of the population had access to social benefits like provident fund, medical and paid leave, maternity benefits, medical reimbursements etc.

Casualisation of Labour

Given the above-mentioned fact, it is clear that about 90% of the people in the country depend on employment in the unorganised sector. However workers in the unorganised sector also need to be differentiated according to the duration and security of employment. The National Sample Survey has divided the work force into three broad categories: the usual workers, the weekly workers and daily workers who work on a person-day basis. A usual worker is one who works most of the 365 days in one year. This type of worker can be divided into principal and subsidiary workers. The principal workers are those who have stable employment throughout the year. The nature of work that they do can be divided into three regular, self-employed and casually employed. Casual employment denotes regular work at piece-meal or informal terms. The post reform period has seen a growth in casual employment. The percentage of people under regular employment has decreased from 61.4% to 54.8% between 1972-94. In the same period the people availing of casual employment increased from 23.2% to 32%. This means that increasing number of people are faced with restrictions on demanding any formal benefits of employment since the relationship between the employer and employee is usually non-contractual and informal in character.

Feminisation of the Labour Force

Casualisation of labour has increased for women at a higher rate and about 60% of the women work in the casual workforce. In contrast less than half of the male workers belong to the casual workforce. The work participation of women has increased from 22% to 28% between 1991-97. Evidence from India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and other countries suggest that more and more women are being employed in services that require cheap labour. These occupations include home-based domestic work and on construction sites. The trend in the post-reform period is increasingly towards the temporary and contractual employment for women on unfair wages and with inappropriate

and inferior conditions of work including lack of maternity benefits and childcare.

Retrogression and Employment

Job insecurity is only one of the factors that leads to unstable lifestyles and is influenced by the sluggish growth in the agricultural and industrial sectors. There has been a corresponding increase in the employment in the services or the tertiary sector. This is reflected in the declining work participation rate in self employed people in agriculture from 65% in 1972-73 to 58% in 1993-94 that has been due to marginal, uneconomical holdings by small farmers. At the same time many economists have opined that the increase in casual labourers in the agrarian sector has not risen at a rate that corresponds to this decline. But these figures do not reveal the true picture behind the employment scenario. The period between 1991-98 has seen industrial retrogression and therefore a burgeoning of the mobile workforce in the country. This has been induced by the lack of opportunities in the formal sector and limiting of options in the non-farm sector, especially reflected in the close down of a majority of rural household industries. The closing down of small oil presses and wheat mills all over the country is a case in point. These factors have prompted people to seek seasonal employment in sectors like construction, mining, domestic work, and daily wage labour. It has also induced increased migration of people into urban areas to look for labour opportunities in order to make ends meet.

Urbanisation and Migration

One of the main effects of the casualisation of labour has been the growing rate of urbanisation and urban poverty, which is the result of the retardation in production and growth of the service sectors. The cities, which are also seen as hubs of industrialisation, are considered to be the primary places to look for wage employment especially in industries like construction, or other forms of daily and contract labour. A report on *India's Urban Sector* (1998) by the National Institute of Urban Affairs has shown that there has been an alarming increase in the rate of urbanisation in the last two decades. The rate of migration has increased from 15.2 in 1971 to 17.4 in 1991. All indications are that they are increasing. The number of people living in urban areas has doubled from 78.9 million in 1951 to 159.5 million. Though no substantial estimates are available for the post-reform period there all reports indicate that these trends will only increase with reforms. The increase in the urban population and the regression in the economy of the 1990s has also led to insecurity of wage employment compelling poor to accept below poverty line wages and work overtime.

Natural Resources and Employment Security

Employment opportunities are affected by the changing nature of land use patterns. Some examples of these are sighted below:

Agriculture

Agricultural production of food grains declined markedly in the post reform period. The average growth of the food grain output was 3.4 between 1980-81 and 1990-91. This declined to 1.4 between 1990-91 and 1997-98. Pulses and coarse cereals (the food of the poor) registered negative growth rates of -1.3 and -0.7 respectively in the post-reform period. These crops were replaced by commercial crops that required a high cost inputs. Since this was not possible on smallholdings it led to the loss of land by small and marginal farmers. The increasing casualisation of labour in the rural sector in the post reform period can be attributed to this factor. Further the degradation of these lands is also taking place at a fast rate, as the small farmer cannot afford to experiment with new technologies. The lowering of ground water level and the problem of irrigation has also led to degradation of marginal lands. 40% of marginal agricultural lands are degraded and of these small and marginal farmers own many holdings. Therefore many farmers are forced to depend on seasonal employment to make two ends meet.

Forests and Watersheds

Apart from providing seasonal employment, energy and fodder inputs to the rural poor, the forests are also the protectors of the ecological security of the country. They protect the water flows from the hills into the plains and also save lands from soil erosion and degradation. Because of this it has been recommended that 33% of the area in the plains and 66% of the area in the hills should be kept afforested. However this has not been the case in our country. In 1987 only 23.8% of the total area was recorded as forest and this has declined to 19.7% in the 1990s. India has lost 90% of its frontier forests and 57% of what remains is endangered despite the introduction of Joint Forest Management and other programmes. The failure to evolve programmes that will arrest deforestation will affect not only the health of water sources and agricultural lands but will also impact upon climate and productivity. Further the erosion of the forest base will lead to the shrinking of supply of fuel-wood and fodder that give the rural poor some supplementary income.

Wage Insecurity & Declining Purchasing Power

The emerging scenario on employment has had a detrimental impact on the situation of real wages, savings and the capacity of people to fulfil their daily needs. The simultaneous inflation of the 1990s has also led to the threat to the declining access of people to food and other basic needs such as proper living

spaces. Therefore there is a growth in slums and other unauthorised colonies where even lower middle class people are forced to live. Further the lack of savings and the withdrawal of the state from the social sector have made poor and lower middle class salaried people incapable of handling any major misfortune in terms of health, natural disasters or declining fortunes. Here we consider some of these aspects.

Decline in Real Wages

The real wages (or wages adjusted against inflation and price rise) of the workforce have generally declined in the post-reform period. The latest economic survey shows a decline of 2.1% in the real wages of agricultural labour that forms the bulk of the workforce. Even though the wages have been fluctuating since 1991, economists have been reporting that the general trend of stagnation and decline is mostly a result of the distress conditions in the economy. It has been reported that women, particularly, are attracted to the subsidiary labour market and unpaid casual employment in bad years. In the industrial sector too, the workforce has seen an average decline in real wages of 2.45% between 1989-93. The changing employment patterns and expansion of the unorganised sector can be seen as being responsible for this. This has especially effected women and a significant decline is seen in female wage earners in the rural labour market from 41.6 percent in 1974-75 to 32.5 percent in 1983 and around 30 percent in 1993-94. Together with these factors, economists have shown that the destruction of non-farm sector has contributed heavily to the decline of wages. Together with this there are many violations of the Minimum Wages Act. In Delhi alone 24,388 cases of violation were registered between 1992-96.It must be understood that the vast majority of minimum wage violations go unreported.

Increasing Poverty and Pauperisation

The government has been boasting of declining poverty since it started the poverty alleviation programmes. Though the definition of poverty can be complex (in terms of access to facilities, living conditions etc) here we are more concerned with poverty that arises out of income insecurities. This has often been termed as income poverty. In 1975 a little more than half of India's population was considered below the poverty line. By 1997 the incidence of poverty had declined to almost 37.2%. However the average annual rate of decline of poverty was only 0.9%, and this was mainly because the post reform period saw a considerable slowdown in the decline of the number of people living below the poverty line. If we see the changes in poverty statistics we find that the main decline in poverty was in the period between 1987-91. Thereafter the rate of decline not only slows down but is also reversed in the period between 1995-97 with the numbers below poverty line increasing by small margins. In this context it is pertinent to note that the number of urban poor whose decadal growth has been over 25% in last two decades. Similarly

the number of rural poor have also increased marginally between 1995-97. Thus the evidence of employment and wage insecurity are directly seen on the incidence of poverty in the years after reform.

Rising Prices of Essential Commodities

Along with the trend of declining real wages the lower class consumer is faced with rising in the post reform period. The consumer price index (i.e, actual prices adjusted against the purchasing power of the consumer) has risen to double-digit figures for industrial workers, agricultural workers as well as urban employees in the service sector. The inflation rates recorded for the year 1998-99 are 13.2%, 11.0, and 11.3 respectively. The percentage of increase in inflation since 1991 is 1.6% for industrial workers, 3.9% for agricultural workers and 0.3% for urban service sector workers. The inflation for industrial workers and the workers in the service sector is partially relieved through access to the PDS system that is under threat today.

Rising of Daily Needs: PDS and LPG

Though the allocations of foodgrains into the PDS system has been increasing marginally, the off take of these foodgrains has declined by 2% between 1991-98. This means that the Food Corporation is left with unused stocks of food grains because the outreach of the PDS system has become very limited. The PDS coverage has decreased from 15.3% of the population in 1951 to 9.1% in 1995. This has mainly because of the 75% price rise in PDS items that have resulted from cuts in subsidy by 20-30%: a strategy that is an integral part of the reform process. The current budget has once again increased the PDS prices. This was reflected in the fact that the rural household spent 64% of their incomes on food whereas the urban households spend 54% of their incomes on buying food despite access to PDS. Added to this is the daily increase in prices of everyday commodities like LPG gas and public transport that has evoked an aggressive response from all classes of society.

Savings and the Capacity to Cope with Unforeseen Circumstances

Given the increasing cost of living, secular trends in the decline in real wages, and the slowdown in decline in poverty, the ordinary person's capacity to have savings is minimal. There is some possibility of forced savings under the provident fund for those who have regular employment in the organised sector. However this prospect does not exist for workers in the unorganised sector. There are no estimates for the amount of savings in this sector and it is quite safe to assume that the correlation between the cost of living and decline in real wages does not allow much saving. This has the potential to lead to indebtedness. It is a well acknowledged fact in urban India that poor people are borrowing more to spend on health rather than for any other purpose. In the organised sector too, the Pension and Provident Fund schemes are being

subverted through the reform process. Recently the Government has decided to risk the provident fund money in the stock market in order to enhance its income.

Impact of Current Trends : Health Implications

We have dwelt considerably on the erosion of the capacity of the households to provide a secure life for their families in the post reform period. In this section let us look at the ways in which the above mentioned developments can impact upon the health of the society and its citizens. These factors impact on the whole population but the severity of their impact is seen more in women who are also affected by the liberalisation process to a greater extent.

Implication for Nutrition

Employment and wage insecurity has taken its toll over the nutrition status of the country. A recent study by Madura Swaminathan shows that the number of households that had insufficient food intake increased from 44.2% in 1991-92 to 47.7 % in 1993-94. About half the population of the country was deficient in energy and therefore undernourished. Women and children form a special group of people as far as malnutrition is concerned. In low income groups, the daily food deficiency of pregnant women is as high as 500 kilo calories and they need an additional fifth of food they habitually eat to meet their requirements. This is reflected in a high incidence of low birth weight babies which is 52% amongst women with severe under-nutrition, 42.2% with moderately malnourished and 37.1% with mildly under-nourished mothers. Maternal women are found to have high protein, iodine and iron deficiency. As far as children are concerned, the NNMB data on nutrition of pre-school children in urban areas reveals that ***only 10% of such children had a normal nutrition status***. The rest were faced with mild, moderate or severe malnutrition. The decline in severe malnutrition has slowed down after the reforms. If we see the entire post-reform period till 1995 than the decline in severe nutrition is only by 1.5 percent as compared to 4 per cent between 1979 and 1990.

Conditions of Work

One of the most destructive impacts of economic liberalisation has been the withdrawal of the state from the social sector. This also means that the state has abdicated the role of attempting to provide welfare services to labourers in the informal sector. Thus social security benefits are confined to a few people in the unorganised sector. The removal of state controls also means that there is no regulation of working hours, amount of wages paid and the conditions of work amongst unregistered labourers. The case of child labourers employed in hazardous industries is particularly alarming since there are rules governing this aspect of employment. The often reported deaths of children working in

chemical industries, fires in congested workplaces and other such incidents only show that we need better state interference and not less of state control.
In the wake of the expansion of the unorganised sector, women have also suffered immensely. A study by the National Institute of Urban Affairs shows that at an average most women spent 7 hours outside the house and 4 hours working inside the house thus making their workload of 11-12 hours per day. This puts a triple burden of working inside the house, outside it and looking after children. Most women do not even get maternity benefits and start working one month after their child is born. This also jeopardises the health of the child. In the wake of the mobility of labour and the increasing tendency of people to live in nuclear families, the women need more institutional support to survive these stress conditions.

These are only a few examples of the ways in which the employment and wage security impact upon the health of a nation and its citizens.

Poverty Alleviation: Government Scheme and Allocation

Till 1997 the Integrated Rural Development Programme and the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana were the main poverty alleviation schemes. However it was often felt that these schemes did not meet their targets because a central authority administered them and all planning was done in a centralised way. The main focus of these schemes was to bring about rural development through the creation of employment opportunities. In 1997 these schemes were merged into Swarna Jayanti Swarozgar Yojana that aimed to finance self-help groups that would also run micro enterprises to sustain themselves. The main aim of this scheme seems to be to help people to sustain themselves in the advent of the withdrawal of the state from the welfare sector. This withdrawal is seen in terms of the decrease in allocation of funds for rural development by 6% in the budget for the year 1999-2000. Budgetary allocations to deal with urban poverty have also been reduced by 13%.

The Need for Intervention
Issues to be included in Campaign

The discussion above shows that there are intimate links between the livelihood situation and the health of the society in the current scenario. Insecurity of employment and wages has dissipated the capacity of poor people to deal with emergencies especially with respect to health. This acquires great significance because of the rising cost of health care and the withdrawal of the state from the health sector. In the event of these developments this campaign should demand:

- Right to gainful employment for all able bodied human beings above the age of 18.

- Regularisation of all workers in the unorganised sector and the implementation of the minimum wages act. Tripartite boards should be set up to monitor this process.

- Social security for all workers whether in the organised or unorganised sector. This should include the provision for health care, childcare, state-managed insurance system and other elements suggested by all concerned parties.

- Restoration of livelihood security through income generation, capacity building access to credit and other facilities. However this should be through a process of people's planning as adopted by Kerela. Panchayats may also be involved in this process.

- Restoration of subsidies especially with respect to the PDS system and support for all measures effecting food security.

This note was prepared for the NCC by
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About the Jan Swasthya Sabha

Governments and international agencies have failed to reach and have even forgotten the goal of **Health for All by 2000 A.D.** But we, the people, cannot forget it. It is time to strengthen and expand people centered initiatives - to find innovative solutions and to put pressure on decision makers, governments and the private sector.

There is a need to reiterate that attaining **Health for All** means ensuring everyone has access to affordable quality medicare, safe drinking water and sanitation, adequate nutrition, clothing, shelter and employment and no one is discriminated against on the basis of class, caste, race or gender. **There is need to renew the call of Health for ALL.**

With this understanding a large number of people's movements across the country have jointly initiated a national campaign called the Jan Swasthya Sabha. This has three broad objectives:

- To re-establish health and equitable development as top priorities in policy making with primary health care as the strategy.
- To forge a local, national and global unity of all democratic forces to work towards building long term sustainable solutions to health.
- Reinforce the principle of health as a broad inter-sectoral issue

The campaign has a four-tier structure. 2000-3000 blocks in 200-300 districts mobilize people on **Health For ALL – Now!** and conduct block level enquiries into the state of health services. These enquiries culminate in block seminars highlighting the findings & helping formulate people's initiatives for primary health care. Then, each district has a district level mobilization culminating in a District Seminar. All this builds up to the Jan Swasthya Sabha to be held in Calcutta from Nov 30th – Dec 1st 2000. Four trains with representatives from various parts of the country will arrive at the National Assembly. The Jan Swathya Sabha – with over 2000 representatives – will call for a reversal of structural adjustment policies and a renewal of the *Health for All* pledge. The assembly will also send its representatives to the international People's Health Assembly being held at Dhaka from Dec 4th-8th, 2000 where similar representatives from other countries will gather. Following the Jan Swasthya Sabha, each interested block or district follows up with health intervention and advocacy programmes.

The Jan Swasthya Sabha is being coordinated by a National Coordination Committee. This is the third book in a 5 book series brought out by the NCC for guiding the block, district and state seminars.

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